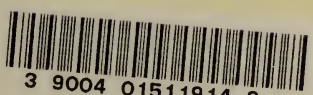
Rev. Jas. Middleton

MISCONCEPTIONS

IN CALVINISM.


3 9004 01511914 9

LP
F5012
1886
M627

MISCONCEPTIONS

OF

CALVINISM

A Reprint of Papers in the Toronto PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW, including Additional Papers on Statements of the CHRISTIAN GUARDIAN.

By REV. JAMES MIDDLEMISS, D.D.,
Minister of Chalmers' Church, Elora, Ont.

PRICE TEN CENTS.

TORONTO:
PRESBYTERIAN NEWS CO.
1886.

The EDITH *and* LORNE PIERCE
COLLECTION *of* CANADIANA

Queen's University at Kingston

MISCONCEPTIONS

OF

CALVINISM:

A Reprint of Papers in the Toronto PRESBYTERIAN REVIEW,
Including Additional Papers on Statements of
the CHRISTIAN GUARDIAN.

By JAMES MIDDLEMISS, D.D.,
Minister of Chalmers' Church, Elora.

TORONTO:
PRESBYTERIAN NEWS CO., TORONTO STREET.
1886.

PREFATORY NOTE.

The following papers on Misconceptions of Calvinism are reprinted from the Toronto *Presbyterian Review*, in accordance with the suggestion of a number of friends whose opinion is entitled to respect. It is hoped that whatever may be the sentiments of readers in relation to the subject itself, or their judgment on the writer's treatment of it, they will find nothing inconsistent with his disavowal of a controversial spirit and purpose. He believes that those who think they are justified in speaking reproachfully of Calvinism are, for the most part, mistaken in their views of it; and he is constantly meeting with plausible statements, that are fitted to perplex and grieve simple-minded and sincere believers who have been trained in the school of Calvinism. He cannot but think that it is possible to disabuse candid minds of the mistakes under which they labour; and he would like to believe that there are very few who are so invincibly riveted in their opposition to the distinctive views of Calvinists, as to be unwilling to know that they have been mistaken. Many, no doubt, will gladly welcome an endeavour to show that Calvinism is something very different from the representations that are too frequently given of it.

In taking on himself the responsibility of presenting his articles to the public, in the form of a pamphlet, the writer believes that the object he has in view will be best served by his issuing a *close* reprint of what originally appeared in the *Review*. He would have liked to give, in some places, additional force to the points urged, or, at the least, to add a few notes, some of them anticipating possible misapprehension or objection, and others explaining one or two statements of the *Westminster Confession* that are specially taken exception to, and confidently appealed to in justification of current misconceptions. But this would have made it necessary to issue the reprint at a price which, he fears, would seriously affect the circulation. He hopes, however, that, without any such endeavour on his part to make his publication less unequal to the subject and better fitted to serve the object in view, it will, by the blessing of God, be found helpful to some who are perplexed, and that others will find it not unedifying, as giving expression to their own views and feelings in relation to their own spiritual history.

Elora, *April*, *1886*.

MISCONCEPTIONS OF CALVINISM.

I.—INTRODUCTORY.

IN an early number of the REVIEW, the present writer referred to the fact that the teachings of Calvinism are misapprehended and misrepresented more than those of any other system that professes to exhibit the teaching of Scripture respecting our salvation. At the same time he expressed his belief that every genuine Christian is, at heart, a Calvinist, and that little beyond a proper representation of Calvinism is needed to secure his cordial acceptance of it, as the most complete and correct exhibition of Scripture doctrine. Though many will dispute this, we have no doubt it will bear examination. We believe there are many sincere Christians who, having unhappily received their views of Calvinism from caricatures of it more or less gross, could not fail to see its accordance with Scripture and their own religious experience, by simply applying their minds to a judicious and candid presentation of its distinctive teachings. And there are probably many others whom a just representation of Calvinism, put in contrast with prevailing misconceptions of it, would, without a word of argument, free from the perplexity occasioned by those misconceptions. We are disposed to think, therefore, that a series of short articles, whose distinctive feature shall be a direct and candid statement of the peculiar teachings of Calvinism, without any endeavour to defend them by argument, may serve a good purpose. An attempt of this kind is, we cannot but think, especially needed in these days, in which the art of caricaturing, by pen as well as by pencil, has attained to such perfection, misrepresentation being very often made to take the place of solid reasoning and serious discussion, even in relation to the profoundest and most important questions that can occupy men's minds.

Notwithstanding incessant protest and frequent exposure, there are to-day many otherwise intelligent persons who accept, as a correct exhibition of the beliefs of Calvinists, the misrepresentations that have been current from early times. Perhaps most of the opponents of Calvinism sincerely believe

that there is nothing unfair in representing it as teaching in substance,—That if, on the one hand, a man is divinely elected or destined to salvation, he will be saved infallibly, irrespective of all concern, on his own part, about salvation, or however careless he may be in the matter of religion, and however wicked a life he may lead, even to its close; and that if, on the contrary, a man is not so chosen or destined, he cannot be saved, however anxious he may be to obtain salvation, whatever efforts he may put forth, and however much his conduct may be distinguished by virtue and piety. The teaching of the Synod of Dort (A.D. 1618) on the subject of *predestination* and *election* is thus represented by Daniel Tilenus, a theological professor at Sedan. Professing to present in an *abbreviated* form the views of the Synod, he gives the following as the substance of its teaching:—"That God, by an absolute decree, hath elected to salvation *a very small number* of men, *without any regard to their faith and obedience whatever;* and secluded from saving grace all the rest of mankind, and *appointed* them by the same decree to eternal *damnation, without any regard to their unbelief and impenitence.*" While there is every reason to believe that the learned man who penned this very foul caricature of Calvinistic doctrine, was wanting in honesty of purpose, it is much to be regretted that very many, if not most, of the opponents of Calvinism accept such statements as just representations of its teachings. It is probably known to a number of our readers that Thomas Scott, the well-known commentator, did so for many years, and that he aided by his pen in the circulation of what he afterwards describes as "gross misrepresentation" and "atrocious calumnies." And, no doubt, many would, like him, undergo a change in their views respecting Calvinism, if, instead of depending on second-hand representations, they would, actuated by something of his candour and love for truth, take their views from those who are entitled to be regarded as the proper exponents of the system.

We do not hesitate to say that any intelligent Calvinist will readily allow that no sane man will look upon the doctrine ascribed to Calvinists by Tilenus, as coming within the region of things requiring discussion or even admitting of it. Whatever Calvinists are, they are not the *fools* that his representation makes them. We do not deny that, erring like the adherents of other systems, some professing Calvinists have emitted utterances which, considered without reference

to the views maintained by those whom candour will regard as the proper representatives of Calvinism, would go far to excuse such representations as that of the Sedan professor. But, as a matter of fact, Calvinists, as such, hold no view in relation to the salvation of some and the perdition of others, except what, they feel warranted in believing, must be held by every intelligent Christian. We need say nothing about the relative number of the saved and those who are finally lost; respecting which Calvinism pronounces no judgment, though Jonathan Edwards and other eminent Calvinists believe that the whole number of the saved will, notwithstanding all present appearances to the contrary, greatly exceed the number of those who finally perish. But we cannot without some difficulty understand how any intelligent Christian can allow himself to represent Calvinists as believing that men are elected to salvation, "without any regard to their faith and obedience whatsoever," and that they are appointed to eternal damnation, "without any regard to their unbelief and impenitence."

We hope to take up in the articles that follow, the consideration of misconceptions in relation to particular doctrines. In the meantime, we shall endeavour to present the belief of Calvinists in relation to the salvation of some and the perdition of others, in such a way as to indicate where the divergence between Calvinists and their opponents really lies, and to facilitate the rectifying of misconceptions in reference to particular points of doctrine. With this view, let us take a particular case, say that of Peter and Judas the traitor. On the supposition, which all will allow to be sufficiently well grounded, that the one is saved and the other eternally lost, the Calvinist believes that while on Judas himself lies the blame of his own perdition, Peter cannot, and will not, ascribe his salvation to anything in himself, but only to the free and altogether unmerited grace or favour of God. He believes that Peter must and will ascribe his salvation to God's doing for him what He might not have done, and what He has not done for Judas. The Calvinist is not unaware of the difficulties involved in the conviction that he has in the matter. On the contrary, he will frankly admit that in believing as he does, he is face to face with mystery that, so far as he can see, is unfathomable to creature intelligence. But he feels himself shut up to his conviction, notwithstanding the difficulty attaching to it, and he believes he can see greater and far more serious

difficulties in the opposite view. Even in relation to the things that God uses as means to promote men's spiritual interests, the Calvinist, recognizing the hand of God in the possession by some of advantages which are not possessed by others, cannot but see that the difference involves much that human reason cannot fathom, But, apart from this, he cannot content himself, as some do, with the notion that, up to a certain point, Peter and Judas had a common experience in respect of Divine influence supernaturally affecting their minds, or, otherwise expressed, that God, by His Spirit working in them, conferred on Peter and Judas alike grace sufficient for their salvation; and that having so done, He did no more, but left it entirely to themselves to yield to or to resist the Divine influence, Peter being saved because he yielded, and Judas lost because he resisted. He does not, indeed, deny an experience of inward supernatural influence that may be short of what is saving, and that may be common to those who are saved with those who are lost; but he believes (and may I not say that, as a Christian, he feels constrained to believe ?) that however far such common experience may extend, the action of the soul, in yielding to the Divine influence, is *itself* the result of the forthputting of a Divine power in the soul, determining its action. He does not deny that there is an act of the soul in connection with which a man's spiritual experience becomes distinctively saving: but he believes that that act is graciously and Divinely determined.

No reasonable man, we freely admit, can overlook the difficulty involved in the view now presented. But while it is the view that contains the essential germ of Calvinism, the difficulty involved in it is surely a difficulty that confronts a man, not because he is a Calvinist, but because he is a Christian, in the highest sense of the term, *i.e.*, a man spiritually quickened and savingly enlightened and renewed. Surely if I am a Christian in this sense—if, that is, I have passed through a spiritual experience, resulting in my having reason to believe that I am in a state of salvation, or if, still otherwise expressed, I have yielded to the Divine influence made to bear upon me, I cannot but believe that this is the result of God's doing for me what he might justly not have done, and what He has not done for the man who is not in a state of salvation. *In my own salvation* is wrapped up what is to me the mystery of all mysteries. But deep as the mystery is, *my own salvation*, according to the view I have of what consti-

tutes the essence of Calvinism, compels me to be a Calvinist, inasmuch as I clearly see that I owe my salvation to God's doing that for me which He has not done for others, and but for which I had surely, but not the less justly, perished even as they. How can it be otherwise when I see

> "'Twas the same grace that made the feast
> That sweetly forced me in ;
> Else I had still refused to taste,
> And perished IN MY SIN ?"

"Who maketh thee to differ from another ? and what hast thou that thou didst not receive ?"

II.—HUMAN DEPRAVITY.

While it is chiefly in relation to the subject of *predestination* or *election* that Calvinism is misrepresented in such a way as to lead many to regard it as unreasonable and morally pernicious, those who apprehend aright the essential connection and inter-dependence of the several points on which issue is joined between Calvinists and their opponents, will see that all their differences turn *radically* on the view that is taken of man's *condition as a sinner.* It cannot but be that our views of the Divine action in man's salvation will correspond with, and be determined by, the views we have of the condition from which that action delivers him. What God does for the sinner in saving him, must be precisely what his actual condition makes it needful to be done to put him in a state of salvation. We propose, therefore, in considering in detail prevalent misconceptions of Calvinism, to begin with those of its teaching on the subject of *human depravity.*

It may be well, however, before proceeding, to say that it must be understood that, in these articles, we assume not only the Divine authority of Scripture and its distinctive character as an inspired record of Divine revelation, but those views of God that are implied in the doctrine of the Trinity, as it has always been held by the great body of professing Christians. We are not now dealing either with sceptics or with Socinians. We are making a well-meant endeavour to disabuse the minds of Christian brethren, who have been unhappily led to believe that we entertain views that in reality we abhor and repudiate. These, we take it for granted, will assent to our statement that our views of the Divine action in our salvation—whether it be the action that, in accordance with our common views of

Scripture teaching, we ascribe to the Father, or to the Son, or to the Holy Spirit, will essentially depend on what we believe to be man's condition *as a sinner*, or on what we believe to be implied in the fact of *human depravity*.

The French theologian, whose misrepresentation of the Calvinistic doctrine of election we quoted in our first article, gives the following as an "*abbreviation*" of the views of the Synod of Dort in reference to man's *fallen condition*:—"That by Adam's fall his posterity *lost their free will*, being put to an *unavoidable necessity* to do, or not to do, whatsoever they do, or do not, whether it be good or evil; being thereunto predestinated by the eternal and effectual decree of God." And this or similar misrepresentations being inconsiderately accepted, as they very generally are, the Calvinistic system is charged with making God the author of sin, as placing man under a *physical necessity* of sinning, and then punishing him eternally for sinning, do what he may or can to avoid it. It is not needful, in the cause of Calvinism, to deny that inconsiderate and unwarrantable statements have been made on this subject, by its professing adherents. But no man can present such a view of Calvinistic doctrine as is given in the above quotation, without being open to the charge of want of candour, or of culpable ignorance of the sentiments of those who are entitled to be considered the proper exponents of the system. When a man says that Calvinists believe that, "by the fall of Adam men have *lost their free will*," and are "put to an *unavoidable necessity* to do or not to do whatsoever they do or do not," etc., he *ought to know* that he is using words fitted to produce a false impression. Who can believe the honesty of a well-informed man who would thus misrepresent the teaching of the pious and learned men whose *actual* teaching is, that "by the fall man does *not cease to be man*, endowed with *intellect and will*," and that "sin, which has pervaded the whole human race, has not taken away the nature of the human species, but depraved and spiritually stained it"; "so that even this Divine grace of regeneration does not act upon men like stocks and trees, nor take away the properties of his will, or violently compel it while unwilling; but it spiritually quickens, heals, corrects, and sweetly, and at the same time powerfully, inclines it, so that whereas before, it was wholly governed by the rebellion and resistance of the flesh, now prompt and sincere obedience of the spirit may begin to reign, in which the renewal of our spiritual will and our liberty truly consist?"

While Calvinists emphasize the fact of man's *spiritual death*—while, that is, they believe that *human depravity* includes all that is implied in man's being described as *truly* and *totally* "*dead* in trespasses and sins," they do not believe that spiritual death involves the loss of any distinctively human power or capacity. They believe that it involves the *perversion* of men's powers, under the control of dispositions of mind contrary to the will or law of God. They do, indeed, believe that the will of fallen man is in *bondage;* but it is a bondage that he *freely consents* to and *chooses* and that is *pleasing* to him. They believe, in other words, that in respect of his spiritual condition, sin has the *complete* rule of him, Satan leading him "captive at his will," the chains by which he holds him in captivity being his own lusts or depraved dispositions of mind. Notwithstanding his retention, in his fallen state, of all distinctively human powers, in virtue of which God deals with him as a rational and accountable being, they believe he is spiritually *dead*—as *truly* and *properly* dead spiritually as a man is dead physically when the animal life is extinct. They recognize spiritual death as a fact, just as they recognize physical death. And they believe it may and does co-exist with the *full vigour* both of the animal and of the intellectual life. (See 1 Tim. v., 6.) And not only so, but they see, in the misdirected energies of the animal and the intellectual life, the very *emphasis* of the evidence of the spiritual death which is the universal condition of humanity, apart from its participation in the gracious provision announced in the Scriptures. It is not at all needful that we should either define spiritual death or prove its existence. It is enough, in view of the design of these articles, to say that when a Calvinist speaks of a man as being spiritually dead, he means that his spiritual condition is such that the forthputting of *Divine* power, *i.e.*, of a power *distinctively* Divine or that God *only can* put forth, is *necessary* to his being brought into the condition which is the opposite of spiritual death—the condition of being spiritually alive or living.

As we are here at the root of the whole controversy between Calvinists and their opponents, we would be especially careful to guard against all misapprehension. The Calvinist, let it be distinctly understood, does not deny man's capability of much that is noble and praiseworthy, or his capacity of high and noble things in the various relations of humanity, in this present world, any more than he denies man's rationality. And

he knows that God will not dispense with man's use of the powers with which he is endowed, but will, in all His dealings with him, deal with him in accordance with his constitution; saving him, therefore, in the way of imparting to him such knowledge of Himself as He sees to be needful to his trusting Him, and to his turning to Him from his sins in the assurance of forgiveness. But he believes, with good reason, he is assured, that all God's dealing with him fails as to any saving result in his personal experience, apart from the forthputting in his soul of a power distinctively Divine, such as is put forth in *creation* or in the *resurrection* of the dead. He sees that apart from the forthputting of this power, men are "as the horse or as the mule, which have no understanding"—that, possessed of rationality, they act irrationally in the things of God. He does not pretend to know the *mode* of the Divine operation: no man, no creature *can* understand the mode of operation that is distinctively Divine. But there *is* such a mode of operation, and there are things impossible to other operation. One of these, the Calvinist believes, is the sinner's regeneration or *spiritual quickening*. He believes that his condition, as fallen, is such that Almighty power is needed to his personal salvation, and that his passing from death to life is the result only of the forthputting of power distinctively Divine, put forth, we know not how, back of and beyond all our powers of observation, by Him who "speaks and it is done," who "commands and all things stands fast."

III.—HUMAN DEPRAVITY—*(Continued)*.

There are many who attach no such idea to *spiritual death* as Calvinists do. To many, spiritual death is not a distinct and awful reality. In their view, to speak of the sinner as being spiritually dead, is to use a strong figure expressive merely of moral weakness and imperfection. That man, as fallen, is spiritually dead does not, in their estimation, imply that he cannot attain to regeneration or come into a state of salvation by the use of the powers which, in his fallen state, he still possesses; or that he cannot turn to God, except as the result of the operation in his soul of a power distinctively Divine, such as is put forth in creation, etc. We would be careful not to be misunderstood and to avoid all misrepresentation of the views of others. But we cannot but see that there are many who admit the necessity of Divine influences of some kind, in order to men's conversion and salvation, but who

nevertheless appear to come short of a right apprehension of the necessity of an operation distinctively Divine in regeneration. For they hold that, in order to a man's embracing the Saviour, nothing is needed beyond such influences as are common to those who embrace the Saviour with those who reject Him; and that one man's yielding to the Saviour while another rejects Him, is not to be ascribed to the forthputting of a power in the one case that is not put forth in the other, but entirely to an act of the human will equally competent to both. Here we, as Calvinists, are at issue with them: not, indeed, denying an experience of common Divine influences, or overlooking an act of the human will in yielding to or resisting and rejecting the Saviour; but believing that the act of the will in yielding to and embracing the Saviour is to be ascribed only to the operation in the soul of a power distinctively Divine, such as that to which we ascribe *creation* or the *raising of the dead.*

If our readers keep in mind the principle that our views of the Divine action in man's salvation will depend upon the views we entertain respecting man's actual condition as a sinner; and that, according to the view of Calvinists, founded, as they believe, on a correct interpretation of Scripture and of the facts of human nature in the light of Scripture, man's condition as a sinner is one of spiritual death, they should not, we think, have any great difficulty in seeing that Calvinists, as a matter of *consistency*, are shut up to the acceptance of the several particular doctrines of their system. And especially they can hardly help seeing, almost at a glance, that if their views of what is implied in spiritual death be granted, there can be no denying of their doctrine of *efficacious* or (as it is sometimes called) *irresistible* grace, though the latter term is apt to be misunderstood and requires explanation.

Before proceeding, however, to consider the "point," whose consideration naturally comes next in order after that of the teaching of Calvinism on the subject of *human depravity*, it may be well to obviate certain misconceptions of Calvinism, involved in confounding or associating it with certain doctrines that have been matters of controversy from time immemorial, and in improperly ascribing to the views we have already presented difficulties that are not peculiar to Calvinism.

From statements already made, it will be apparent, we think, to all candid persons, that those are mistaken who confound or associate Calvinism with *fatalism.* Calvinism gives

no countenance to the notion that it is vain for a man to exert himself, in the way of using appropriate and available means, with a view to the accomplishment of any desirable end. As little does it give any countenance to the notion that man is under any *physical* necessity of sinning. Rather, it holds such a necessity to be impossible. Any necessity of sinning under which a man lies, is, according to Calvinism, a *moral* necessity, such as does not lessen his responsibility or extenuate his sin. That a man is so morally corrupt, or so much the *slave* of evil propensities, that he *cannot* but sin, and *cannot* embrace the Saviour and turn from his sins to God is, every reasonable person will admit, something altogether different from his acting under the compulsion of an iron physical necessity, as fatalism teaches, and Calvinism utterly denies.

It is proper also to caution our readers against the error of confounding or associating the *spiritual bondage* of the sinner, that Calvinism teaches, with the doctrine known under the name of philosophical *necessity*. Calvinists differ among themselves in regard to that doctrine, some being strongly opposed to it. There are, indeed, anti-Christian writers of the present day who believe it to be the essence of Calvinism, and who are probably incapable of seeing their mistake. The germ and starting point of Calvinism, as a religious system or system of Christian doctrine, lies in man's *fallen condition*. Any necessity of sinning or inability to do right, other than that involved in the fact that man is "dead in trespasses and sins," is *outside* of Calvinism, which, while it affirms of man all the liberty that is essential to full responsibility, raises no questions of a metaphysical kind in relation to the freedom of the human will. As a system, it is built upon the recognition of the fact that, *created* in the "image of God," man, in his *fallen state*, up to the time of his spiritual quickening or regeneration by the spirit of God, is *properly* and *totally* dead in sin, destitute of *all power* to do what is spiritually good, *totally unable* to save himself, *dead* to all that has power to move the spiritually quickened soul.

In reference to difficulties which some suppose to be peculiar to Calvinism, it is known to many that men of the highest name, who have no sympathy with Calvinism, have pointed out the mistake of thinking that that system lies under any peculiar obligation to give a satisfactory account of the existence and continuance of moral evil or sin. Calvinists do not profess to be able to solve the mystery of moral evil; and other

difficulties that may appear to be involved in their distinctive doctrines should, they believe, not count for much in the judgment of a reverent and humble mind. They see that, as a matter of fact, God, whom they believe to be infinitely good and wise as well as almighty, has permitted certain of His intelligent creatures to fall by sin into a state of helpless ruin, from which, they believe, He is under no obligation of justice to deliver them. They accept what they believe to be the Scripture account of the entrance of sin into the world, according to which the human race was placed under such a constitution of things, that the first man's renunciation of his subjection to God has *fatally affected* his posterity. They are grateful for the light they have; and they believe that, while God has an unquestionable right to establish connections among His creatures, in virtue of which their moral conduct, good or bad, shall affect others as well as themselves, the ultimate issue will make it manifest that He overrules for good all the evil He permits, making it the occasion and the means of displaying His goodness, wisdom, righteousness, and power in a way and to an extent beyond what is possible, apart from the existence of a state of things which, meantime, is the occasion of perplexing thoughts.

IV.—EFFICACIOUS GRACE.

We trust the ground is now cleared for the removal from candid and considerate minds of misconception of the peculiar teaching of Calvinism. Dealing, as we now do, with those who accept the Scriptures as a record of Divine revelation, and who have reason to believe that they have themselves personal experience of Divine saving power in connection with their knowledge of Christian truth, we think they should not have any great difficulty in seeing that the particular doctrines of Calvinism must, if rightly apprehended, be, as a matter of consistency, accepted by those who believe that man's condition, as a sinner, is such that his salvation is impossible otherwise than by the forthputting of power distinctively Divine. And though we fear there will always be some disposed to misrepresent, and even vilify, the doctrines of Calvinism, we hope there are others who, seeing and feeling as we do on the subject of human depravity, will not be hard to convince that there is nothing in Calvinism to which they can consistently make objection. Those who are opposed to us on that subject we must, at this point, take leave of, with the expression of

our sincere regret that they do not see what is to us one of the most patent of all facts, our perception of which depends not so much upon our observation of other men's principles of action as upon our study of our own moral condition in the light of Scripture.

If man's condition as a sinner is such as Calvinists believe it to be, nothing, one would think, can be more evident than that he must owe his personal salvation to the exercise of a power beyond and above his own, or that of any creature—a power that God only can put forth—or, using the language employed in controversy on the subject, to the *efficacious* grace of God—sometimes spoken of as *irresistible* grace, though, as already said, this term needs explanation. For, without explanation, the word may appear to give colour of justice to the misconception that continues current respecting our teaching on the subject. Tilenus, in full consistency, indeed, with his misrepresentation quoted in our *second* paper, but not the less unfairly, represents Calvinists as holding "that God, to save His own elect from the corrupt mass, doth beget faith in them, by a power *equal* to that whereby He created the world and raised up the dead; in so much that such unto whom He gives grace *cannot reject*, and the rest *being reprobate, cannot accept it.*" Now, of course, Calvinists *do* hold that God puts forth or applies His own omnipotence or almighty power in man's regeneration. They do so, because they believe that no other power is adequate to it. And they *do* hold that the application of that power is *actually efficacious* in the regeneration of the man who is the subject of it. But the matter is totally misconceived by those who represent Calvinists as teaching that a man is regenerated and brought into a state of salvation, and, we may add, kept in it, *in spite of himself*, or *in opposition to his own resistance* of Divine influences, or even notwithstanding his own carelessness and indifference. For, according to the Calvinistic view, *efficacious* grace—the grace that saves—or the application of the Divine omnipotence in regeneration, or the communication of spiritual life, is not the influence that the sinner resists, but the grace that *makes him cease resistance*, the grace that so operates in his soul that his disposition towards God and His Christ *is changed*, the grace that *makes him willing* to be saved in God's own way. It is, perhaps, hardly needful to call attention to the *animus* of the *abbreviator* in expressing himself as if it was a ridiculous thing to suppose the need of omnipotence

in so small a matter as man's regeneration. It is surely not necessary to say that the need of Divine power depends not on the *quantity* of the work to be done, but on the *nature* of it. Divine power is as much needed to the existence of an atom as of the universe, and the latter is as easy to it as the former.

In view of the explanation now given, one cannot help asking, Why should there be any difficulty in the matter to one who regards the sinner as being *properly* and *totally dead?* Or, why any hesitation to admit the *fact* of efficacious grace, breaking down and terminating the sinner's depraved and unreasonable resistance to God? Or, why should there be any misunderstanding from the use of the word *irresistible*, when, from the nature of the case, the subject of the operation is in such a condition, and the distinctive nature of the operation is such, that *active* resistance of the subject is impossible? For let it be noted that the subject of the operation is *dead—truly, properly,* and *totally* dead; and the operation is the communication of life by the power alone that is capable of communicating it—*i.e.*, the Divine omnipotence, the power of Him who "speaks and it is done," who "commands and all things stand fast," who "calls those things that be not as though they were." What is non-existent cannot resist the power that calls it into being. The dead cannot resist the power that imparts life. In the same sense and no other, to the same effect and no other, the man who is spiritually dead cannot resist the Divine power that quickens him, a power whose mode of exercise is beyond our comprehension, and whose actual exercise is not a matter of direct observation, but known only by its effects, to which Divine power alone is adequate. Who that admits the depravity of man, as held by Calvinists, can misunderstand them in their belief that human depravity is such that man stands out against all the influences that *ought* to move him, until he has undergone a change by the forthputting in his soul of a power distinctively Divine? The Calvinist, as already said, cannot be satisfied with the view of some, that the believer having been made partaker of Divine influences, in common with others who may not be saved, yielded to those influences, while the others did not. There is, he feels, a *defect* in such an explanation. He may not deny the common influences or the act of the will in yielding or resisting, but he feels he must go farther and deeper. He cannot resist the conviction that the yielding *itself* has a *cause* out of, beyond, and above himself—a cause

no other than the forthputting of a Divine power that effectually inclined and determined the soul to embrace the Saviour.

Many professing Calvinists are not genuine Christians, and many Christian believers are not Calvinists. But we may surely venture to say that no genuine Christian will hesitate to ascribe his own personal salvation to the forthputting of a Divine power, producing an effect that could not be otherwise produced, a power which is not put forth in the case of such as do not embrace Christ, and which, he feels, might not have been put forth in his own case. He has no thought that, had this power not been put forth in his own case, there would have been any ground to charge injustice on God. On the contrary, his own experience of it is a matter of *wonder* to him, and the thought of it humbles him and stimulates him to prayer and exertion on behalf of others. No Christian in a right frame of mind can but wonder at his being made thus to differ from others. He cannot, indeed, cavil or complain; but questions arise that he can give no answer to. He cannot tell *why* God has put forth His power in *his* salvation rather than in that of *another*. He only knows that there is *no reason* in *himself* why God should have thus favoured him. He sees that God has, in his experience, fulfilled the word in Ezek. xxxvi., 25-27—"Then will I sprinkle clean water upon you, and ye shall be clean; from all your filthiness and from all your idols will I cleanse you. A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you; and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments and do them." But as to the reason or reasons why he is himself the subject of this *efficacious* grace he can say nothing more than that the reason is *not to be found in himself*, as he is reminded in the words: "Not for your sakes do I this, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you; be ashamed and confounded for your own ways." He can easily enough see reasons of a general nature why there should be special instances of the experience of grace of a kind more or less remarkable; but why the selection to such special experience should fall upon one rather than another, or upon himself rather than others, is a matter whose explanation he cannot even conjecture. With thankful heart he recognizes the *efficacious* grace of which he is the subject, and he may be able to trace to a greater or less extent the operation of the hand of God in the instrumentali-

ties with which his salvation is connected ; but that he should be a man actually in a state of salvation, notwithstanding all the dangers, on his escapes from which, often narrow and marvellous, he looks back with trembling gratitude, he cannot but ascribe to something infinitely beyond his own power to choose and determine wisely and well for his own interests—even to nothing less than the exercise of a power distinctively Divine, respecting the forthputting of which in his own behalf he can only say : " Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Thy sight.'

V.—ELECTION.

The system of Christian doctrine denominated Calvinism assumes, as we have seen, that man in his fallen state is *spiritually dead.* We may indeed say that the whole system is built on the recognition of the fact that fallen man is *properly* and *totally* dead, without a pulse of spiritual life : his state being thus one from which there is no deliverance except as the effect of the forthputting of a power distinctively Divine. A Calvinist, therefore, is one who believes that when a man is saved, or brought into a state of salvation, he is saved only by God's putting forth, in his personal experience, a power that is exclusively His own, such as is put forth in creation or in the communication or restoration of life. He believes that, while this power may be put forth apart from the exercise of intelligence in the subjects of it, as it is in the case of infants and others regenerated by the Holy Spirit, the spiritual quickening of creatures possessed of intelligence takes place in connection with the proper exercise of their intelligence and of the moral freedom with which it is associated. But he believes, not the less, that the *same Divine power* is needed for the spiritual quickening of the man whose intelligence is developed ever so highly, as much as for that of the human being of undeveloped intelligence. If, because of the possession of intelligence, the spiritual quickening is associated with an act of intelligence and freedom in the one case, as it cannot be in the other, that act, he believes, is only and always the effect of the Divine power imparting spiritual life to the dead soul and determining its choice of Christ.

The difficulties necessarily involved in the view which the Calvinist feels shut up to the acceptance of, by his own experience as a Christian, as well as by the teaching of Scripture, have been already adverted to, and do not call for further

consideration. This, however, is the proper place to say that, *beyond* the point we have now reached, Calvinism presents no *peculiar* difficulty. Rather, if we are satisfied to accept the teaching of Calvinism up to that point, we must either carry our acceptance further, having only such difficulties to deal with as are not peculiar to it, or refuse to go further, at the cost of having to deal with difficulties of a much more serious kind. This, we trust, will be apparent as we proceed.

Although the doctrine of *election* has been made the *battle-ground* of assaults upon Calvinism, and although it is perhaps mainly in connection with this doctrine that it is represented as unreasonable, unscriptural, and unfavourable to morality, objection to Calvinism on the ground of its doctrine of election is both unreasonable and out of place. For the Calvinist, in his belief of that doctrine, is simply making an application of the principle that the Divine *action* accords with the Divine *purpose* or *intention*—a principle that no one who has right views of God will question. He believes, that is, that if God puts forth His power in the salvation of a man, whom He might justly have left to perish *in his sin*, He does so *in accordance with a purpose*, or does what He has purposed to do. And, surely, if there is to be any objection taken in the matter, it should be made against the *actual* procedure as being of an objectionable *character*. The Calvinist, as we have said again and again, sees the difficulty involved in God's putting forth in *his* behalf a power that he might justly *not* have put forth, and has not put forth in the case of many *others*. But he feels no one can reasonably object to the *simple fact* of the accordance between the actual procedure and the purpose. And that is really all that the Calvinistic doctrine of election adds to its teaching so far as we have already had it before us.

No intelligent Calvinist holds any such view in relation either to God's actual procedure or to His purpose as would imply that God is the author of sin. The evil that exists is not *His doing*. It exists by *His permission*. He does not—that is, *interfere to prevent* its existence. And Calvinists hold that His permission or non-interference is in accordance with His purpose, or decree, or determination, to permit the evil that exists, or not to interfere to prevent it. They believe, further, that He has good reasons for permitting evil, though we may be capable of perceiving them only very partially, and that He overrules it for good. They feel it is very presumptuous to reason, as some do, on the implied assumption,

that God cannot, consistently with His perfections of justice and goodness, make creatures capable of choosing to disobey Him and of *destroying themselves* by disobedience or sin. This, they believe, is to assume the impossibility of moral government under God. Having made such creatures, who have actually destroyed themselves, He makes their doing so, Calvinists believe, the occasion of such a manifestation of His perfections as could not have been made otherwise. That, while some are saved by the forthputting of Divine power, to the exclusive praise of Divine grace, others are not saved, and perish justly *in their sin* and unbelief, is, as we have seen, a matter which is confessedly a mystery of mysteries, especially to such as are themselves saved. But that God should in this matter, as in all else that he does, act in accordance with a purpose, *makes no addition* to any difficulty they may see. Rather, it would be altogether contrary to their views of the essential perfection of God, to think that the forthputting of the Divine power in their *effectual calling* could be anything but the actual carrying out of a Divine purpose.

Calvinists are fully aware of the difficulty, or rather the impossibility, of showing the consistency of the Divine purpose or of the Divine foreknowledge with man's freedom and responsibility. But the difficulty is not peculiar to Calvinism, as the simple mention of *foreknowledge* may remind us. We know indeed, that some, when pressed by the argument that the Divine foreknowledge, as much as the Divine decree, implies a *certainty* that it is difficult to reconcile with *freedom*, endeavour to obviate the difficulty by pleading the possibility of *voluntary ignorance* on the part of God, on the ground of His omnipotence. But such, clearly, are not to be reasoned with, any more than the man who would, on the same ground, plead the possibility of the Divine self-annihilation.

This, however, is by the way. We have yet to take special notice of the current caricature of the views of Calvinists on the subject of election. It is greatly to be regretted that there appears to be so much of a tendency to represent them as holding that God has decreed the salvation of some, *altogether irrespective of their faith and obedience*, and decreed the damnation of others, *altogether irrespective of their unbelief and impenitence. (See quotation in Article I.)* They are represented as teaching directly, or by implication, that if God has elected a man to salvation, he will be saved, as a matter of *infallible certainty*, though he may live and die in neglect

of the great salvation, and in the indulgence of his evil propensities; and as teaching that if a man is not elected to salvation, he *cannot* be saved, however anxious he may be to obtain salvation, and whatever efforts he may put forth in the way of seeking it and endeavouring to please God. And it is assumed that, according to the teaching of Calvinism, all concern in relation to Divine things being *needless*, if a man is destined to salvation, and *useless*, if he is not so destined, a man may on the one hand, act under the persuasion that he is safe, however careless and wicked he may be, or, on the other hand, live in the belief that it is vain for him to trouble himself in relation either to his own salvation or to that of others.

While this is perhaps the very essence of Calvinism in the view of many, it is hard to conceive of a misconception of a character more gross. In point of fact, Calvinism teaches that a man is saved only in the proper use of the powers he is endowed with as a rational creature, and that he obtains salvation only in the way of his being interested about it and embracing the Saviour; and it denies that he can have any knowledge of God's purpose to save him, except as an *inference*, drawn in accordance with Scripture, from the fact that he *has been* persuaded and enabled to embrace Jesus Christ and to follow Him. As much as their opponents, Calvinists insist on man's having such a place and concern in his own salvation as accords with and illustrates the principle, that the wisdom of God will not dispense with a man's use of the powers God has endowed him with. But they believe there is nothing inconsistent with this, in their holding further that a man's desire to participate in the blessings of the great salvation, his anxiety and his efforts, and his actually yielding himself to the Saviour, are all the *effect* of the operation of Divine power, and that, however certainly they are the acts of his own intelligence and freedom, he is not the less certainly moved and determined to them by the operation within him of a power distinctively divine, put forth in accordance with a purpose, as all Divine action must be. To employ the language of Scripture, a Calvinist believes not that a man is saved *without any regard* to his "willing and running," but that he "wills and runs" only because he is moved thereto by God's *prevenient* and *prevailing* or *efficacious* grace, and that God, in conferring this grace, acts in accordance with a purpose. And he reasonably thinks that he has a right to take it ill that, because he *gives God the praise* of his "willing and run-

ning," he should be represented as teaching that "willing and running" have *no place* in the matter of his salvation.

VI.—VICARIOUS WORK OF CHRIST.

We have seen that to the intelligent and thoughtful believer, his own salvation is a matter of wonder as well as of gratitude. That he is himself the subject of the *efficacious* grace of God; or, in other words, that God, in the exercise of the power that is *His alone*, has "taken away the stony heart out of his flesh and given him an heart of flesh," while he might justly have been left to perish, as others, in his sin and unbelief, is a mystery that he cannot fathom. While, through the knowledge of the fact of his spiritual resurrection by the Divine power, he rises to the assurance of his *election*, his *predestination* to the saving experience which he is the subject of *adds nothing* to the difficulty which, he freely confesses, he cannot conceive any solution of. On the contrary, as a Calvinist, he cannot conceive of his experience being other than the *carrying out of a purpose.*

Following the order that we have considered most convenient in relation to the design we have in view, we come next to the subject of *Christ's atonement* or His *vicarious work*—a subject that may perhaps be thought not to call for special consideration in connection with our present design, inasmuch as, while the Calvinistic view of it will be generally admitted to be in harmony with the other teachings of Calvinism, any objection to which the Calvinistic view is supposed to be open is not much unlike what is urged against election. We are persuaded, however, that there exists, to no small extent, very serious misconception as to what is *really important* in connection with the *vicarious work* of Christ—the portion of His *priestly* work that, in the belief of all for whom we now write, constitutes Him our *Saviour.*

It is well known that Calvinists differ among themselves in reference to what is called the *extent of the atonement* of Christ. Some believe that while the death of Christ has secured many important benefits to the human race at large, it is proper to say that, confining our regard to the death of Christ as the divinely appointed means of *salvation*, He died *only* for those who are *actually saved;* and others though holding firmly the other teachings of Calvinism, believe that he died for *all men*—for those who are not saved as well as

for (and some may even say, equally and alike with) those who are saved. We shall assume, however, that the former is the view strictly consistent with Calvinism as a system. It would be aside from our purpose in these articles to argue the point, our design being not otherwise to vindicate the views of Calvinism than by endeavoring to obviate misconceptions respecting them. But it accords with this design to call attention to the fact that the difference between Calvinists and their opponents on the subject of the *extent* of Christ's atonement, implies a difference of view in relation to the *place* that His vicarious work has in man's salvation. Those who believe that Christ died for those who are *not* saved equally and alike with those who *are* saved, must have views of the *nature, design* and *results* of Christ's work, in laying down His life, very different from the views of those who believe that He died only for those who are saved. In the judgment of Calvinists, the difference is of a very serious nature.

There are certain points relating to Christ's vicarious work in relation to which, we may assume, there is a general agreement among Christians. They are generally agreed that it is the *divinely appointed way* of salvation. Even those who are most opposed to Calvinism will allow that, on supposition that God would save sinful men, it is, using the language of the Apostle to the Hebrews, "*becoming*" that He should do so in the *way* that the Scriptures so fully indicate, and that, so far as we can see, it would not be "*becoming*" that men should be saved by the mere forthputting of *power* on the part of God, or otherwise than by the *obedience unto death* of the Son of God. All, except such as we have already taken leave of, believe that, in point of fact, according to Divine appointment, there is *no way* of salvation for any human being but Christ's *vicarious work*—His *atoning* or *sacrificial* death; and that God has, from the beginning, always or in every case, *had respect to it*, in saving sinners. And there is, we believe, an equally general agreement among Christians that the *need* of the vicarious work of Christ in order to salvation arises out of the *justice of God* as the Moral Ruler. "It *became* Him, *for whom are all things*, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons unto glory to make the Captain of their salvation *perfect through sufferings*." But while there is so far a general agreement as to the place that the work of Christ has in our salvation, the Calvinist who is consistent, according to our opinion, in his view of the matter now before us, ascribes

much more to the atoning death of Christ than those do who believe that Christ died for all men. Those who believe that Christ died for all men do not and cannot believe that His death *secured* the salvation of all men, or *actually obtained* their salvation. They cannot consistently do more than believe that it made their salvation *possible.* But Calvinists believe that Christ's death *actually secured* the salvation of all who are saved. They believe, in other words, that God having a purpose of salvation towards fallen man, the obedience unto death of the Son of God, in our nature assumed for that end, is, so to speak, the *Divine action* by which the salvation of all who are saved is *obtained* for them. It is, in their view, the work that constituted Him the *actual* Redeemer of His people ; it is the *meritorious cause* of their salvation ; the *price* by which He bought them, and by which he *secured* for them *all saving good.* A Calvinist, therefore, in holding what is called the *limited* view of the atonement, does no more than hold that salvation was not obtained for those who never become actual partakers of it.

As already said, we do not attempt to argue the correctness of the Calvinistic view. But we consider that it is a matter of some importance that it should be clearly understood, that the *really serious* difference between Calvinists and their opponents, in relation to the work of Christ, has not respect to the question, Did Christ die for those only who are saved or for others equally and alike with them ? but to the *place* that His work has in man's salvation. Holding, as the Calvinist does, that Christ's work was of such a nature that it *secured* or *actually obtained* salvation—including all saving good—he cannot believe that he died for all men alike ; while those who hold that He died for all indiscriminately cannot believe that His work was of such a nature as to secure the salvation of *any,* but must believe that it did no more than make salvation *possible.* Such a view of the work of Christ, Calvinists believe, falls far short of the representations of Scripture respecting its place in human salvation ; and they cannot but regard it as open to objections of the most serious kind. These objections, it does not fall within the compass of our design to consider. The objection to the Calvinistic view that it is fitted to affect the mind of the anxious enquirer after salvation, in the way of making him question his *warrant* to look to Christ as *his own* Saviour, Calvinists cannot regard as being of any weight. They do not believe that the knowledge

that *Christ died for him in particular* is needed by the sinner in order to his trusting in Christ for salvation, any more than the knowledge of his *election* is needed. Faith, according to their view, has a sufficient ground in the knowledge that the God whom we have sinned against is "ready to forgive and plenteous in mercy to all that call upon Him," and that Christ is "able to save to the uttermost all that come to God by Him." Not only does faith need no help from the knowledge of the *unrevealed purpose* of God, or of the *secret intention* of Christ when He laid down His life to secure our salvation; but it is only in the way of faith responding to the *calls* of God, addressed to *all without distinction*, that any can come to the knowledge of things, the knowledge of which attained otherwise could only be injurious to the soul.

Though we might here close the present article, it may be well to add a word in reference to the relation of saving faith to the work of Christ, according to what, so far as we know, is the general view of Calvinists. We may assume that all for whom we now write will admit that saving faith was exercised thousands of years before it could take the Christian *form* of faith in Christ crucified. The very earliest saving faith in God was, no doubt, *implicitly* or *in germ*, faith in Christ crucified, as being faith in God as the *God of salvation through sacrifice*. The faith of Abel was such as would most surely assume the Christian form of faith in Christ crucified, on the communication of the *knowledge* of Christ crucified; because it was the faith of one who, with all the ancient believers, "waited for the consolation of Israel." But that saving faith may have the form of faith in Christ crucified, it is, Calvinists believe, needful *only* that a man see or be satisfied that Christ, in dying, did what, in its *nature* or in its *relation to the law of the Moral Ruler*, was fully *sufficient* for his salvation—so sufficient that God requires no more in pardoning sin, and man needs no more to warrant his dependence on Christ as his Saviour. To be thus satisfied, it cannot surely be needful that the sinner should know either that God has decreed his salvation, or that Christ secured salvation for him in particular. The wish to pry into these things, Calvinists alway insist, is foolish and sinful on the part of those who have both the invitations and the commands of God to warrant their acceptance of Christ. And they equally insist that it is *only* by his acceptance of Christ, as freely offered to him in the gospel, that the sinner actually comes, or

could safely attain, to the assurance that God purposed his salvation, and that Christ secured or obtained it for him pursuant to the Divine purpose. At the same time, a Calvinist cannot but think that his condition as a believer would be a very unhappy one, were he debarred from believing that Christ, by His death, had done any more for him than make his salvation *possible* or any more for *him* than for those who *perish eternally.*

VII.—PERMANENCE OF THE SPIRITUAL LIFE.

The Calvinistic doctrine respecting the absolute certainty of the *final* salvation of all who are ever brought into a state of salvation by the forthputting of the Divine power in their regeneration or spiritual quickening, is one in reference to which, perhaps as much as in reference to any other, many entertain serious misconceptions ; and it is often represented in terms fitted to produce the impression that its tendency is very injurious in relation to men's spiritual or religious interests. We believe that not a few of its opposers entertain the mistaken notion that Calvinists hold not only that those who are regenerated cannot finally perish ; but that they may continue to be assured of their safety, whatever sins they may be guilty of, or however careless they may become in relation to Divine things and their own spiritual interests. And, indeed, it is not easy to see how any one can ascribe an injurious tendency to the Calvinistic view, except under such misconception. Nothing, however, can be more unjust and unwarrantable than the ascription to Calvinists of any such belief. They do, indeed, believe that God will, in every case, preserve the spiritual life that He has imparted. But they believe that He does so in the use of means employed in accordance with man's constitution as a rational creature ; and they also believe that no man, whatever his experience may have been, or however safe he may be in the view of God and in his actual keeping, has or can have any well-grounded and satisfactory assurance of being or having ever been in a state of salvation, if, for the time being, he has ceased to mortify sin, or is not "giving diligence to make his calling and election sure."

A person may be guilty of great injustice in relation to the views of others, without any gross ascription to them of sentiments which they do not entertain, or which may be the reverse of what they believe. It can hardly be doubted that

the *abbreviator* of Calvinistic doctrine, to whom we have already had occasion to refer, is guilty of such injustice when he represents the *whole* teaching of Calvinism on the subject of the *perseverance of the saints* as being comprehended in the summary, "That" those who have been made partakers of saving grace "can never fall from it finally or totally, notwithstanding the most enormous sins they can commit." We fear there is under this and similar representations a desire to convey the impression that a man, according to Calvinistic teaching, is warranted to consider himself perfectly safe in committing any sin, however great, on the ground that he has experienced regeneration. Whether or not, we are not without reason to think that such an impression is largely prevalent, notwithstanding the fact that, as already stated, Calvinists believe that no man can have any well-grounded assurance of his regeneration while he is not mortifying his sins. Not to insist further on this, it is to be noted that such representations as that above quoted fail to do justice to Calvinism by *leaving out*, whether intentionally or not, the Calvinist's ascription of the believer's safety to the grace and power of *God alone*. No one can be said to give a fair representation in the matter when he says, "Calvinists believe in *men's continuance* in a state of safety in spite of all evil-doing," instead of saying, as he ought to do, "Calvinists believe that *God will not permit* any of His people to wander *permanently* from the way of truth, righteousness, and salvation." Calvinists do not profess to be able to draw a line beyond which the believer may not wander, or to specify a time within which he will be reclaimed. They know, alas! that he may go very far astray and be very long a wanderer from God. But they believe that God will keep His eye upon him and His arm about him, and that He will eventually overrule for good his wanderings and his falls, and that He will do so in such a way as shall not lead him to think more lightly of the evil that is overruled for his good and the good of others. On the contrary, they believe He will do so in the way of making the wanderer bitterly regret his sin and folly, and of making his falls a means of humbling him and breaking him from reliance on other strength than God's, and of weaning him from the world.

In view of the well-known fact that Calvinists are very far from holding the doctrine of the *sinless perfection* of believers, insisted on by some who traduce them, they cannot reasonably be thought to ascribe the security of God's people

to any desert on their part or any strength inherent in them, or to anything but the grace and power of God. They believe that the sin which dwells in all believers would make their continuance in a gracious state impossible, were it not for the constant gracious forthputting of the Divine power in their behalf and in them. They know too well, as a matter of fact, that believers may be seduced or violently carried away by the devil, the world, and the flesh, into the commission of very grievous sins—sins exceedingly offensive to God, worthy of death, as all sin is, and greatly wounding the conscience, and depriving the soul of the comfort of the assurance of a gracious state. But they believe that Scripture warrants the persuasion that while God, righteously and for reasons that we can partially understand, permits His people thus to stray, He will in no case fail to deal with them in such a way as to prevent their final apostasy. They cannot see in this persuasion any encouragement to sin, because they know, not only that these things subject the children of God to the discipline of the rod of Divine correction, but that the loss of all assurance of salvation and the revival of apprehension of final perdition are a *part* of the correction that God employs to check them in their evil career and to reclaim them. Many know from their own sad experience that, while peace can be restored in such cases no otherwise than by penitent confession of sin, as on the occasion of the soul's first return to God, the backslidden believer may be subjected to the experience of more poignant mental distress than what he passed through in connection with his first conversion—an experience, therefore fitted to make him more humble and careful in his walk for the time to come. In short, while it is true that Calvinists regard the persuasion that God will not suffer him to perish eternally as being a most precious and even an essential element in the believer's assurance of his salvation, it is never to be forgotten that they strenuously insist that no sound assurance can stand with wilful or heedless departure from the Lord, and that if a believer is guilty of the folly of *presuming* upon his safety, so as to be less careful in his Christian walk, he will be made to smart for his presumption.

A candid consideration of the *whole* teaching of Calvinism on the subject of the *perseverance of the saints* cannot fail, we think, to impress the mind with the persuasion that it is in strict harmony with the Scripture representation of the believer's *filial* relation to God. A careful student of the

words of Christ can hardly overlook the emphasis that he gives to *permanency* as a characteristic of sonship, in contrast with the *precariousness* of the position of the mere servant or subject. "The servant abideth not in the house for ever; but the son abideth ever." The Calvinist may truly say that, in holding the doctrine of the *perseverance of the saints*, he is but denying the *precariousness* of the believer's filial relation to God, and that he could not accept his opponent's view of the precariousness of the believer's relation to God without practically denying its filial character.

It is well known to some that when Arminian views were taking shape in the beginning of the seventeenth century, the opponents of Calvinism were much longer undecided in relation to the subject of the present article than they were in relation to any of the other "points" of difference between them and Calvinists. Arminius, only a few months before his death, declared that he had not opposed and was not willing to oppose the doctrine of the *certain perseverance of true believers*, because, as he said, it was supported by Scripture testimonies that he could not set aside; but that some things relating to it excited in him scruples and hesitation. In accordance with this, we have often thought we could see that brethren, who were opposed to us on other points, were so impressed by the strong teaching of Christ and by the value of the doctrine in some respects, that nothing prevented their acceptance of it except the dread they had of its being *abused*, or the fear that the believer who accepted it might feel himself so safe as to venture on the commission of sin. These brethren do not consider that *genuine* believers have a sufficient security against this abuse in the simple fact that no *sound* assurance can consist with it, and that it compels them to question the soundness of their religious experience. There are, of course, other securities. That those who are not genuine believers may abuse the doctrine of the perseverance of the saints and die under fatal delusion cannot be safely pleaded against the doctrine. The most precious truths are abused by the carnal mind. The peculiar gospel itself is abused by the *antinomian* to his own destruction; and the *legalist*, in his zeal for the interests of morality, falls into the mistake of practically rejecting the gospel, in the vain hope of shaping it so as to prevent the antinomian abuse of it.

Additional Papers.

I.—UNCONDITIONAL SALVATION—ALLEGED INCONSISTENCY WITH STANDARDS.

The papers on "Misconceptions of Calvinism" that appeared in the *Review* a few weeks ago are, it seems, believed by some to have been occasioned by adverse criticisms of Calvinism in the *Christian Guardian*. The writer, as a matter of fact, did not know of anything in that paper calling for animadversion, but had in view only misconceptions that he believed to be widely prevalent, and that he had not unfrequently come in contact with. He is not in the habit of reading the *Guardian*, and had not seen it for two or three years, when, after his work was done, a copy of the issue of the 9th of September was put into his hands, containing an article referring to the fact that the *first* of his papers had appeared in the *Review*, and assailing Calvinism in a way that, he could not but think, only further illustrated the need of such an attempt to obviate misapprehension as he had been making for some time.

The writer of the article in the *Guardian* has not followed it up by any reference to my treatment of the subject. The *first* paper being introductory and of a general character, I thought it not altogether improbable that, seeing my purpose was so early taken notice of, the writer might have something more to say when the series was complete. Beyond a quotation, however, referring to Christ's vicarious work, in which there is a notable, though probably accidental, omission, the *Guardian* has not seen cause to take further notice of my endeavour to remove misapprehensions. To what extent I have succeeded in my endeavour it is not for me to say. While I have received communications that refer to it in terms which, I feel, are too complimentary, I would have been glad if some one, who believed that my attempt had been a failure, had dealt with the subject in the line that I have endeavoured to follow, as being the line in which, I believed, I could best secure the intelligent and candid judgment of Christians on a subject which, I know, perplexes many minds

only because they are under misapprehension. The writer in the *Guardian* should be considered fully competent to deal with the subject; and I cannot help wishing that he had assailed my fundamental position and endeavoured to show that the representation I have given of Calvinism is either unscriptural, or, if allowed to be Scriptural, inconsistent, in any respect, with the symbols of Calvinism. Nor can I help thinking that there is a significancy in the fact that subsequent reference to the subject is confined to the quotation above referred to. I cannot but suppose that the writer has reasons for maintaining a *total silence* in regard to *everything* in my papers, with one exception, and reasons for making the one exception and for making it in the way he does. But, as I can only conjecture what his reasons are, and I may easily be mistaken in my conjectures, it is well I should keep them to myself, and leave others to form their own.

The *Guardian*, while declining, for reasons of his own, to endeavour to show that the papers on "Misconceptions of Calvinism" contain anything inconsistent either with the Scriptures or with our symbolical books, has taken occasion to indulge in the very style of representation whose general prevalence was referred to as calling for such dealing with the subject as I have attempted. I confess I am somewhat unwilling to deal with a specimen of misapprehension *hardly behind the worst* I have had occasion to refer to. But I am not without hope that, avoiding repetition as much as possible, a little reiteration of explanations already given, varied in adaptation to a fresh utterance illustrative of the prevailing tendency to present distorted views of Calvinism, may be serviceable to some who are interested in the subject and not wanting in candour.

In my introductory paper I quoted a representation of Calvinism by Tilenus of Sedan, which I characterized as a foul caricature, closing my remarks upon it with the statement that "we cannot without some difficulty understand how any intelligent Christian can allow himself" to be responsible for such a representation. In view of my use of such language, fully warranted as I believe it is in reference to the representation of Tilenus, I cannot but greatly regret that the *Guardian* should have indulged in a similar style of representation. While expressing his belief that Presbyterians and other "Evangelical Calvinists" teach and act inconsistently with Calvinistic "principles or dogmas," he affirms unhesi-

tatingly that their symbolical books, the Westminster Confession and Catechisms, teach, by "inevitable logical consequence," "necessitarian fatalism," inasmuch as they "make salvation *unconditional*," and "declare" in such terms that God "has ordained some to life" and "appointed others to perdition," as to "represent Him as consigning to eternal perdition for not believing in Christ those whom He had *by His own decree ordained to unbelief*."

Though it may be freely admitted that Calvinists of the present day, if they were called anew to formulate their views of Scripture teaching, would, for various reasons, very probably express themselves in terms somewhat different from those employed two centuries and a half ago, we do not hesitate to say that injustice is done to the Westminster Standards in giving such a representation of their teaching. And we can assure the writer that Presbyterians can teach and act as he believes they do, and, at the same time, *cordially accept* the teachings of their symbolical books. It will be observed that he makes a two-fold charge against the Confession and Catechisms: (1) They "make salvation *unconditional*"; and (2) they "represent God as consigning," etc.

A brief consideration of the *former* charge will close the present article. The *latter* we shall endeavour to deal with in another.

In reference to the statement that our symbolical books "make salvation *unconditional*," the *Guardian* is mistaken if he thinks that we do not, in our teaching, make it unconditional *in the same sense* as our Confession and Catechisms do. And we think it should not be difficult to see that they do so, only in the sense in which every genuine Christian must, as we believe, regard *his own salvation as unconditional*, and not in the sense which the writer is obviously attaching to the term. We submit that, after what has been said in more than one of our previous articles, it is not necessary to illustrate this distinction at any length. It should be enough to re-state the *fact* that, while back to a certain point, a man's salvation is *conditioned* on the determinations of his own will as a rational agent under moral government, every Christian *must come* to a point in his spiritual history behind which there are *no conditions*. However patent the conditions on which his personal experience of salvation depends, and however long the line of them may be, he must come to rest in *prevenient* grace. That God has, in His experience, done

in accordance with His word, "A new heart will I give you and a new spirit will I put within you," etc., he cannot ascribe to anything that God saw in *him* as a reason why *he*, rather than *others*, should have been made the subject of efficacious grace. On the contrary, he cordially accepts the reminder, "*Not for your sakes do I this*, saith the Lord God, be it known unto you: be *ashamed and confounded for your own ways.*"

We believe it cannot be shown that our Standards "make salvation *unconditional*" in any other sense than that now indicated. The *Guardian* admits that we "teach that salvation is to be offered to all, and that men are lost because they reject it," the individual man's salvation being thus *conditioned* on the free determination of his will. But SO DO OUR STANDARDS. If there is *inconsistency* anywhere, it is not, as he thinks it is, between *our* teaching and that of our *Standards*. And if it be said, we are then inconsistent with *ourselves*, and our *Standards* with *themselves*, our reply to those who say so is, that to maintain *their own* consistency, they must go further and charge the alleged inconsistency on the *Scriptures*. But, in reality, there is, *so far*, no inconsistency, whatever we may find a little farther on. There is no inconsistency between salvation being *conditional* in *one* sense or aspect and *unconditional* in *another*. The Calvinist, as we have insisted, cannot be satisfied with the view which some think exhausts or sufficiently explains the whole matter. That the gospel being preached to all men indiscriminately and the hearers of it being in common made partakers of Divine spiritual influences, *one* man, in the exercise of his free choice, *yields* to the Divine influence and embraces the offered Saviour, while *another*, in the exercise of the same freedom, *resists* the Divine influence and rejects Christ, does *not*, in the judgment of the Calvinist, *exhaust* the whole matter. While it is contrary to fact that, as one has expressed it recently, "the Word and spirit of God *are given alike* to all men to whom the gospel is preached"; yet, even allowing the truth of a statement so manifestly unwarrantable, the Calvinist, *as a Christian*, cannot be persuaded that there is nothing *behind* or *beyond* "his own free act." That he has *yielded* to the Divine influence, instead of *resisting* it as others, is, he believes, the *effect* of the forthputting of a power distinctively Divine, which he also believes might, without any injustice on God's part, not have been put forth in his experience.

We have no desire for controversy, and we have endeavoured as much as possible to refrain from vindicating the peculiar doctrines of Calvinism, otherwise than by being at pains to obviate prevailing misapprehensions. But should any one think our endeavour worthy of notice in the way of controversy, we beg that, instead of ringing the changes on the commonplace and stale generalities about election and human freedom, he will take hold of the subject at the point where, as we have said, we are at the root of the whole controversy. We beg, in other words, that he will frankly say whether he believes that a man who has a well-grounded persuasion that he is in a state of salvation by his personal acceptance of the Saviour, can do otherwise than ascribe his acceptance of Christ to the forthputting of distinctively Divine power which has been put forth, he knows not how or *why*, back of and beyond his powers of observation, which is not put forth in the case of such as do not embrace Christ, and the forthputting of which in his own case he cannot but wonder at. If he and we are as one here, he will, we are sure, have no little difficulty in showing how he can evade the conclusions of Calvinism ; if we differ, it were a waste of words to argue the matter further.

II.—ELECTION AND PRETERITION—DIFFICULTIES.

We have now to deal with the charge brought against the Westminster symbols, that they (*virtually*, of course, or, as the *Guardian* puts it, by "inevitable logical consequence") "represent God as consigning to perdition for not believing in Christ those whom he had by his own decree ordained to unbelief." Here, again, we would say that if there is inconsistency anywhere, it is not between *our* teaching and that of our *Standards ;* but between *one* portion of the teaching of the Standards and *another*. Of course we do not admit that our Standards are open to any such charge of inconsistency with themselves, any more than we can admit that our actual teaching is inconsistent with that of our Standards. And we might content ourselves with asking the *Guardian* to prove his charge from the language of the Standards. But considering the object we have in view in these papers, we are willing to be at pains to indicate how it is, as we think, that such distorted views are so often given of the teaching of our Standards.

It must be borne in mind that it is especially by reflection upon our own Christian experience, in the light of Scripture,

that we have a settled and firm conviction in relation to those views which are distinctively Calvinistic. As a matter of fact, we regard the Divine procedure from a point which, while our view from it is very limited, has the great advantage of being a *very safe* point of view. We feel we are on safe ground when we have our own religious experience—the actual facts of God's dealings with our own souls—to guide us in our thoughts about His procedure in the actual salvation of sinful men. Many, however, it seems to us, speak as if we were looking at things from God's own point of view, which we feel ourselves utterly incapable of doing, and as if they themselves could take in the whole range of His vision, being fully persuaded that *He* cannot see what *they* cannot, in relation to difficulties involved in the views which His dealings with ourselves compel our acceptance of. The meaning of this will, we trust, be evident enough to those who pay a due regard to what follows.

The brethren who differ from us cannot hold more firmly than we do, *and that in full and strict accordance with our Standards*, that a man's salvation depends on the determination of his own will as a rational creature endowed with moral freedom. So far as our actual teaching is concerned, the *Guardian* will not dispute this. But any one who looks into the Standards must see that *they also, as much as we*, are in full accord with Scripture, in its calls to "repentance towards God and faith towards our Lord Jesus Christ." There is, however, ANOTHER ASPECT of truth in relation to our salvation that *forces itself* upon our attention and *compels our conviction*, especially in connection with our own personal religious experience. We cannot but see that our being in a state of salvation, by our personal compliance with the invitations of the gospel, must be ascribed to God's having put forth in our souls a power that is exclusively His own—a power that He has not put forth in the case of those who are not in a state of salvation, and that, we are persuaded, He might have not put forth in our experience. And so far are we from thinking that we could have charged injustice on God, if He had not made us the subjects of the operation of this power, that, on the contrary, we can never cease to wonder that He did not leave us to perish in our sin and unbelief. That He did not, is to us an *unfathomable mystery*. Does not the writer in the *Guardian* feel, *as a Christian*, just as we do? Is he not, as we are, at a complete *nonplus* in reference to

questions connected with his own salvation? Further we cannot but believe that God, in putting forth, for *no reason in us* that we can see, the power that determined us to embrace Christ, did what He *previously purposed to do*, or acted in accordance with a purpose, as He did when He converted Saul of Tarsus, and (can we avoid saying?) as He does when He converts others. We are, as we have said, fully aware of the difficulty involved in the views to which we are thus shut up. But we cannot reject on that account, truths which we can see to be of no little importance in connection with our cherishing feelings which we regard as characteristic of genuine Christianity. Apart from details, what we have now stated constitutes the *essence and totality* of our Calvinism.

Is it not, then, unworthy of a Christian controversialist to speak of our confession and catechisms as teaching, "by inevitable logical consequence," that God *ordains men to unbelief* and then consigns them to perdition *for not believing?* Even in relation to the awful subject of *preterition*, no one is warranted to say either of *our* teaching or that of *our Standards*, that it goes farther than the recognition of the *simple fact* that God *permits*, or does not interfere to prevent, men's continuing in a state of unbelief, just as He permits, or does not interfere to prevent, their commission of sin, and the assertion that the permission, in the one case as in the other, is in *accordance with a purpose* to permit and overrule for good. That God has not permitted *him* to continue in a state of unbelief, while it is to a Christian a matter of wondering gratitude, cannot but compel him, one would think, to accept the views which some insist in placing *in opposition* to certain other truths relating to man's place and agency in the matter of his personal salvation, but which the Calvinist, let it be noted, holds not *in opposition* but simply *in addition* to them. Those views, indeed, he freely admits, do seem to involve consequences from which he feels he must shrink, and thus land him in difficulties which, he confesses, he cannot solve. But, on the other hand, his conviction of the truth, in *both* aspects of it, is so strong and, he believes, so well-grounded, that he cannot but think that those are *mistaken* who are so confident in their charge of inconsistency. Considering that we cannot go far in our reasonings about the Being who is the sum of all perfection, without being confronted with difficulties in relation to the harmonious operation

of the infinites, it is surely wise not to be too confident in the assumption that it is impossible for God to determine, or certainly know, future events that depend upon the free agency of men. It is charged by the *Guardian* that "the greatest intellects of the Calvinistic school have utterly failed to reconcile the necessitarianism of Calvinistic decrees with human freedom and responsibility." In our judgment, a great intellect will neither make the attempt nor demand it, but will see most clearly that such a reconciliation between the two aspects of truth as is here challenged, is beyond the present capacity of man. Probably Edwards will be allowed the first place among the great intellects of the Calvinistic school. The terms in which he closes a discussion on the Divine decrees may remind the *Guardian*, that he is mistaken in supposing that the ablest defenders of Calvinism are not aware of the point at which the greatest of intellects must acknowledge their weakness. "I wish," says Edwards, "the reader to consider the unreasonableness of rejecting plain revelations, because they are puzzling to our reason. There is no greater difficulty attending this doctrine than the contrary, nor so great. So that though the doctrine of the decrees be mysterious, and attended with difficulties, yet the opposite doctrine is in itself more mysterious, and attended with greater difficulties, and with contradictions to reason more evident to one who thoroughly considers these things."

We trust the day is not far distant when holding, as we do, with our brethren in relation to man's place and agency, as an intelligent and accountable creature, in the matter of his personal salvation, the views to which we feel ourselves shut up respecting *another* and *higher* agency will be no longer misunderstood, and when, though there are conclusions that may be *legitimately* drawn from these views, we shall no longer be held responsible for consequences which, though "logically inevitable," in the judgment of some, are so, we believe, only because our vision is human and not Divine.

III.—CLOSING WORDS.

In concluding these additional explanations, occasioned by the *Christian Guardian's* notice of our endeavour to obviate prevailing misconceptions of Calvinism, we would express the hope that we may be excused if we have failed, in any measure, in our effort to refrain from everything that might savour

of controversy. Though we have found it hardly possible to avoid occasionally making statements of a controversial character, it is in no controversial spirit that we have been at pains to present a just view of the belief of Calvinists. We have been deeply grieved, from time to time, by coming in contact with the most unwarrantable statements respecting our views, and we have been induced to give our thoughts to the public, only because we would like to be of some use, however little, in abating what has of late become, in many quarters, a prevailing folly. While many are no doubt sincere in their opposition to Calvinism and in their dread of it, as they apprehend it, we can fully endorse the statements of a letter received from a friend. "I have no desire," he says, "for doctrinal controversy as such; but I have often been astonished, till familiarity dispelled astonishment, at the prevalance of misconception on this subject. And not only among the more ignorant, for many teachers, preachers, and writers of note take occasion to make a thrust at Calvinism, some of them assuming that it is a dying creed of the past, so severe and harsh as to be out of sympathy with the warm living Christianity of this more free and enlightened dispensation." And he adds: "Many of our people, not able to answer the sneers or plausible attacks and distorted representations, remain silent, with some uncertainty as to the actual facts of the creed which they profess to hold."

Fully justified as our imperfect endeavour is by the existence of such a state of things, we feel somewhat confident that no one who has perused with care and in a spirit of candour what we have advanced on the subject, will be disposed to ascribe it to any narrowness of mind or want of Christian charity, that we frankly indicate our conviction that some of our Christian brethren are guilty of a breach of the law of Christ, in the way in which they deal with our acceptance of certain views of divine truth *in addition* to those important views which they and we hold *in common*. They cannot but see that we hold as firmly as they do, and value as highly, and teach as distinctly and fully, all the truths respecting God and man, which they hold and prize or regard as important. At the same time we believe that, *besides* the truths which they and we hold *in common*, there are certain *other* views which our own religious experience especially forces upon our attention and conviction; and we cannot help feeling that a *wrong* is done to us, when we are set upon and baited, in the way of

being incessantly challenged to give a solution of difficulties which, we clearly see, lie in a region so far above us that our inability to solve them is, we insist, not to be regarded as a reason for rejecting truths which compel our regard, to say nothing more about our views being presented in terms which display, to say the least, a great want of discrimination.

We feel that we can, with all safety, assure those who are continually proclaiming the decadence of Calvinism and predicting its speedy downfall, that their vaticinations will surely fail, so long as there are (we shall not say men of high intellect, but) humble and intelligent Christian believers, capable of reflecting on their own religious experience in the light of reason and Scripture. There will always be found among such, those who feel shut up to the acceptance of the views of truth, in relation to which many are hopelessly perplexed because they approach them, in some instances, not by a right method, and in other instances, not in a right spirit. Those who do intelligently accept them feel that they cannot reject them on account of the difficulties connected with them, especially when they see that the *sacred writers never hesitate* in relation to *either* aspect of divine truth, but even put the two in *close* juxtaposition, without the least suspicion of their inconsistency. Take, for example, the words of Peter: "Him, being delivered by the *determinate* counsel and *foreknowledge* of God, ye have taken, and *by wicked hands* have crucified and slain." "And now, brethern, I wot that through *ignorance* ye did it, as did also your rulers. But those things which God *hath before showed* by the mouth of all His prophets, that Christ should suffer, *He hath so fulfilled.*" And take further the words of the brethren, after the liberation of Peter and John: "Of a truth against Thy holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever Thy hand and counsel determined before to be done." I presume these will be regarded as the words of inspiration. And do they not suggest the very difficulty on which the charge of inconsistency is based? Were our design a controversial one, we might multiply quotations and references. We might even appeal to the prophetic word at large and its fulfilment. But I submit that more than enough has been said to show how untenable and unsafe is the assumption that God cannot so order things, that His determination, or certain foreknowledge, of the future shall not invade the free agency of His intelligent creatures, or affect their responsibility.

Our design, as announced at the outset, has been to give such a representation of Calvinism as might help to free candid minds from perplexities occasioned by prevailing misconceptions. We have some reason to believe that we have not been employed in a vain attempt. However little hope we have of converting to our views those whose opposition to Calvinism is of a very pronounced kind, we are not altogether without hope that what we have written may lead some Christian brethren to be somewhat more cautious and less positive in their utterances in relation to views which they cannot yet see their way to the acceptance of. It is especially to be deprecated that brethren should make common cause with the caviller in reference to truths which both scripture and our own experience, we think, compel our conviction of. What although we cannot *see* their full consistency with other truths which, to our minds as well as theirs, rest firmly upon their own distinctive evidence? They and we are alike agreed that religious cavils have for their ground the impious assumption that man's mind is the measure of God's, and that, were the bat endowed with reason, it would not so much abuse the endowment by making its own power of vision the measure of the eagle's, as the caviller abuses his gift of reason by making the range of his mental vision the measure of God's, and imagining that what is dark and difficult to him is therefore dark and difficult to God. If so, it is surely not asking too much from them, when we beg that, if they cannot yet see their way in relation to a certain class of truths which from our point of view, appear of no small importance, they will give up the use of the stock argument against us, namely, that we cannot solve difficulties which we believe cannot be solved in the meantime. If we are not mistaken, there are indications of the approach of the time when brethren who cannot yet see as we do, in reference to views which we hold *in addition*, and *not in opposition*, to the views which they and we hold *in common*, will not be incessantly appealing to our alleged vain attempts to solve difficulties in which our well-grounded convictions (as we regard them) involve us. They will surely see ere long that we are not quite so foolish as to think that we can place ourselves at the point from which we can clearly trace the hand of God in His government of creatures whom He has made in His own image, by endowing them with the attribute of moral freedom, and whom He thus, as it were, makes capable of a subordinate provi-

dence which it is *necessarily*, as we believe, not easy to reconcile with His own supreme and all-embracing Providence. We claim no superiority of intellect for ourselves; but we could not help thinking more highly of that of our brethren were they to confine themselves to the *direct* endeavour to point out the insufficiency of the grounds on which we rest the convictions to which they are opposed, instead of depending mainly upon an argument which we cannot but regard as a weak and worn-out platitude.

THE *CHRISTIAN GUARDIAN* ON "MODIFYING THE 'CONFESSION OF FAITH.'"

The *Christian Guardian* has been recently directing the attention of its readers to the action of the London Presbytery of the English Presbyterian Church in relation to the "Westminster Confession." In an editorial headed "Modifying the 'Confession of Faith,'" it is stated that certain modifications or "amendments," were proposed in the Presbytery and, after discussion, "carried" by a very large majority. Such a statement, we feel sure, cannot be regarded as a correct representation of the action of the Presbytery, as reported in the *Christian World*, whose report appears in the *Review* of January 21st, and is referred to by the *Guardian*. And the writer is certainly very greatly mistaken if he flatters himself, as he seems to do, that the Presbytery's action, or similar action elsewhere—such, for example, as was taken five or six years ago by the Synod of the United Presbyterian Church in Scotland—is indicative of a disposition on the part of the Presbyterian Churches to fall away from the distinctive principles of Calvinism.

The writer in the *Guardian* is doubtless well aware of the doctrine of the "Westminster Confession" in reference to the supremacy of Scripture as a rule of faith. In view of its affirmation that "the Supreme Judge, by which all controversies of religion are to be determined," "can be no other, but the Holy Ghost speaking in the Scripture," and that "all synods or councils since the Apostles' times may err (and many have erred), and are therefore not to be made the rule of faith and practice, but to be used as an help in both," the ready admission by Calvinists that every creed of human composition may be expected to bear, to a greater or less extent, the marks of human imperfection, will not be regarded as significant of

doubt or hesitancy in relation to *any* portion of their creed. Besides this, it should be borne in mind, though perhaps generally overlooked, that, if we rightly apprehend the distinctive character of a creed, we shall, however strong our persuasion may be that its statements are in full accordance with Scripture, be always prepared to find that it is more or less *defective* as an exhibition of Scripture truth. A creed is to be regarded not as a systematic exhibition of Scripture teaching, but rather as an *accretion* of articles or doctrinal propositions expressed in terms rendered necessary by the erroneous interpretation of Scripture. As one heresy has arisen after another, the Church has found it necessary to state the truth in terms other than those of Scripture, and directly contradictory of those in which error was being taught. The Church's creed is thus neither more nor less than its views of Scripture truth in opposition to the various errors that have sprung up in the course of her history. It may be said therefore, to present, in a more or less systematic form the *attainments* that the Church has made in the determination of the doctrinal controversies through which she has passed. To Presbyterians and other "evangelical Calvinists," the Arminian controversy has been determined, as well as other controversies, in which Calvinists and Arminians are found on the same side; and, so far as we know, there is but little disposition, on the part of intelligent Calvinists, to throw away or even to belittle the attainment which, they believe, has been made in the settlement of that controversy.

It may be that our fathers in dealing with Arminian views, have sometimes expressed themselves in terms little fitted to conciliate opponents, and even fitted to intensify the repugnance that some minds have to the truths to which they gave prominence; and that they did not give to certain important views of divine truth, which were not in controversy at the time, the prominence that they gave to views that were being hotly contested. Admitting so much, little more needs to be said in relation to the "Confession." And so much and nothing more, if even quite so much, will, we apprehend, be found by the candid and intelligent reader, in the account given in the *Review*, of the proceedings of the London Presbytery. We can hardly but think that more than one or two of the readers of the *Review* will be interested in noting that those proceedings have reference to a state of things almost identical with that indicated in our endeavour, in these columns, to

obviate "Misconceptions of Calvinism." As a matter of fact our views are widely misconceived and misrepresented. Because we feel shut up, and that especially by our own experience *as Christians*, to certain views respecting the *Divine Sovereignty*, we are represented by many as teaching *fatalism* and *casting a dark cloud* on the way of access to God which the gospel proclaims. In these circumstances, we are called, both in our individual capacity and in our Church Assemblies, to show that our Calvinism is not what many suppose it to be; and especially that it is not a *one-sided system* that deduces from one aspect of divine truth the negation of another, but a system which, on the one hand gives emphasis to that aspect of the truth, according to which the Christian ascribes his personal salvation to the sovereign exercise of the Almighty power of God, doing for him what He has not done for *others* and might, without injustice, not have done for *him*, and which, on the other hand exhibits, at least *equally* with that of its opponents, the whole truth in relation to God's dealings with man as a rational agent under moral government and under a dispensation of mercy.

If there are Christian brethren who cannot see as we do, while they are glad, with the *Guardian*, to "see us coming out clearly on the great truth of the freeness of salvation for all," we trust they will not let themselves be carried away with the idea that our endeavours to vindicate ourselves against misconceptions are indicative of any disposition to modify our views respecting the Divine Sovereignty. They ought to know that it is no new thing for Calvinists to preach the gospel in terms of their Lord's commission. They ought also to know that our Standards give no uncertain sound in relation to the universality of the invitations and commands of the gospel, or in relation to man's responsibility. And, as we have more than once reminded our readers, there is nothing new in relation to the difficulty involved in our acceptance of views that appear to be in conflict with other undoubted truths. Calvinists have all along been familiar with the difficulty; nor is there the least likelihood of its leading us to renounce our Calvinism; because that, we believe, would only land us in greater difficulty. It is well, however, that, for the sake of those who misunderstand our position, and for the relief and comfort of those who are in perplexity through misapprehension, emphasis should, from time to time, be given to the principle that we are on dangerous ground, when, for-

getting that God "is God and not man," we will not allow to Him a mode of knowing and acting that transcends our own. Ingenious men of the Calvinistic school, seeing the sure grounds of *both orders* of truth, will no doubt be always repeating attempts to solve difficulties. But we apprehend the "greatest intellects" will coincide with Edwards, in the quotation made in a former article, and with Locke, when he says, "I cannot have a clearer perception of anything than that I am free: yet I cannot make freedom in man consistent with omnipotence and omniscience in God, though I am as fully persuaded of both as of any truth I most firmly assent to; and therefore I have long since given off the consideration of that question, resolving all into the short conclusion that if it be possible for God to make a free agent, then man is free, though I see not the way of it." Our readers will see that this is the ground taken in the London Presbytery. Surely a little reflection should satisfy the most sanguine Arminian, that he is mistaken in regarding it as indicative of the *advance of Arminian sentiment.*